Strengthening Science and Technology Infrastructure

2875. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: .Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that our science and technology infrastructure is not up to the mark;

(b) if so, the main hurdles responsible therefor; and

(c) the details of steps Government propose to take to strengthen science and technology infrastructure in universities and related institutions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAW AT): (a) to (c) In comparison with other developing countries India has a highly developed science and technology infrastructure.

There are many centres of excellence in various fields which can compare with the best in the world. The Government has over the last five decades made substantial investments in providing high quality infrastructure. However, some inadequacies do exit in the science & technologies infrastructure in Universities and other institutions of higher learning. To meet this gap the Government has recently initiated a new Scheme called the "Fund for improvement of S&T infrastructure in Universities and higher educational institutions (FIST)" Over 200 Departments in universities & related institutions have so far been identified for support in strengthening their infrastructural facilities.

Privatization of SAIL

2876. MISS FRIDA TOPNO: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that SAIL is on the way to privatization;

(b) if so, the reasons for privatizing it;

(c) what would be the fate «f the .employees; and

(d) what is the status of fertilizer plant of Rourkela Steel *f* lant?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) There is no proposal at present to privatise SAIL.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

(d) Fertilizer plant of Rourkela Steel Plant continues to be part of SAIL. However, there is a plan to convert it into a Joint Venture.

Modernization Failure of Rourkela Steel Plant

2877. MISS FRIDA TOPNO: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Rourkela Steel Plant is on the verge of collapse due to paucity of funds and losses accrued to it by the modernization failure;

(b) whether any special grant is being given to RSP to overcome its losses;

(c) what would be the future of workers if the plant faced a closure; and

(d) what forbids Government from taking action against the erring officials for loss in production due to failure in modernization?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) and (b) No, Madam.

(c) There is no plan at present, to close RSP.

(d) SAIL has informed that the volume of production has been regulated due to depressed market conditions and not because of any failure in modernization.

Setting up of a Training institute under SDF

2878. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have granted Rs. 10 crore out of Steel Development Fund (SDF) for a training institute to be set-up in Orissa; and

(b) if so, whether SDF can be utilized for such purposes?